Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:
1998

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DD MM YY

Designation date

Site Reference Number

2. Country:
Australia

3. Name of wetland:
Coongie Lakes, South Australia

4. Geographical coordinates:
Latitude: (approx) 28^0 36'S to 26^0 18'S; Longitude: (approx) 139^0 00'E to 141^0 00'S

5. Altitude:
Approximately 25 - 120 metres

6. Area:
Total area - 1,980,000 ha (approx)

7. Overview:

A complex and extensive freshwater wetland system comprised of channels, waterholes, lakes and numerous shallow floodout plains, interdune corridors and swamps.

Wetlands specifically included are:

Lake Coongie
Lake Marroocoolcannie
Lake Marrooculchanie
Lake Tontoowaranie
Lake Goyder
Lake Marra Dibba Dibba
Lake Apanburra
Lake Hope together with a large number of other Lakes
A section of Cooper Creek and its anabranches is also included.

8. Wetland Type:

marine-coastal:	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**	**I**	**J**	**K**
inland:	**L**	**(M)**	**(N)**	**O**	**(P)**	**Q**	**R**	**(Sp)**	**Ss**	**(Tp)**	**(Ts)**
	U	**Va**	**Vt**	**W**	**Xf**	**Xp**	**Y**	**Zg**	**Zk**		
man-made:	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**		

9. Ramsar Criteria:

1a **(1b)** **(1c)** **1d** | **(2a)** **(2b)** **(2c)** **(2d)** | **(3a)** **3b** **(3c)** | **4a** **4b**

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:

10. Map of site included? Please tick *yes* ☐ -or- *no.* ☒

11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page.

13. General location:

Innamincka - Far Northeast of South Australia

14. Physical features:

The area contained within the Coongie Lakes wetland is part of the Cooper Creek which originates in Queensland on the Great Divide and flows into the Lake Eyre. The Cooper drains an area of some 296,000 km^2 and within South Australia, flows through areas of dunefields and gibber plains. Within the upper portions of the declared wetland, the main channel carries water in most years to the Coongie Lakes but flows less frequently in the lower reaches. The Cooper is recognised as one of the largest rivers in the world that is still in a natural state.

15. Hydrological values:

The Cooper Creek is part of the Lake Eyre Basin, one of the largest endorheic drainage systems in the World. To date, the wetland and drainage systems within this Basin are not modified and although little studied, are considered to be in natural condition. Because of the lack of studies, the hydrological values are largely unknown.

16. Ecological features:

The Coongie Lakes Wetland occurs on the Cooper Creek floodplain. Cooper Creek has a large catchment in the high rainfall region of central Queensland and carries water into the wetland during winter. Water rarely moves farther south to reach Lake Eyre except during major floods when the creek and its distributaries may spread across the floodplain to a width of 30km. Many lakes and waterholes rarely fill, others hold water for a limited period following flooding and others such as Lake Coongie are almost permanent.

A major flood heralds a period of flourishing plant growth and an influx of wildlife to the wetland. Large numbers of waterfowl congregate to feed and many species breed. As floodwaters retreat waterfowl such as the Freckled Duck, Pink-eared Duck and the Black-tailed Native-hen disperse widely through southern and eastern Australia.

Because of the remoteness of the location and the variability in water input into the area, accurate records of wildlife in the region are not available over a full range of water regime conditions. A Biological Survey of the Cooper Creek Environmental Association was carried out by the Department of Environment and Planning in 1984 and the survey report by F.H. Mollenmans *et al* is the basis for much of the information in this nomination.

Common species of water birds include:

Marsh Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*
Hoary-headed Grebe	*Poliocephalus poliocephalus*
Australian Pelican	*Pelecanus conspicillatus*
Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*
Little Black Cormorant	*P. sulcirostris*
White-faced Heron	*Ardea novaehollandiae*
Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
Sacred Ibis	*Threskiornis aethiopica*
Straw-necked Ibis	*T. spinicollis*
Royal spoonbill	*Platalea regia*
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	*P. flavipes*
Black Swan	*Cygnus atratus*
Freckled Duck	*Stictonetta naevosa*
Australian Shelduck	*Tadorna tadornoides*
Pacific Black Duck	*Anas superciliosa*
Grey Teal	*Anas gibberifrons*
Pink-eared Duck	*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*
Hardhead	*Aythya australis*
Maned Duck	*Chenonetta jubata*
Blue-billed Duck	*Oxyura australis*
Black-tailed Native-hen	*Gallinula ventralis*
Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*
Brolga	*Grus rubicundus*
Masked Lapwing	*Valellus miles*
Banded Lapwing	*V. tricolor*
Red-kneed Dotterel	*Erythrogonys cinctus*
Red-capped Plover	*Charadrius ruficapillus*
Black-fronted Plover	*C. melanops*
Inland Dotterel	*Peltohyas australis*
Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*
Red-necked Avocet	*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*
Greenshank	*Tringa glareola*
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	*Calidris acuminata*
Red-necked Stint	*C. ruficollis*
Australian Pratincole	*Stiltia isabella*
Silver Gull	*Larus noveahollandiae*
Gull-billed Tern	*Gelochelidon nilotica*
Whiskered Tern	*Chlidonias hybrida*
Caspian Tern	*Hydroprogne caspia*

(Note: these species may only be common or relatively common at irregular intervals when conditions are suitable).

17. Noteworthy flora:

None listed

18. Noteworthy fauna:
The wetland contains an undescribed and probably endemic species of freshwater tortoise *Emydura sp*. Little is known about this tortoise but it appears to be confined to the Coongie Lakes area. During drought large numbers are concentrated in the permanent waterholes and during floods presumably they spread widely through the wetland. On the basis of available information it seems that the Coongie Lakes wetland is critical for the continued survival of this species.

The wetland is also important to a range of land birds and mammals which need to drink regularly.

19. Social and cultural values:
The Cooper Creek has long been recognised for its cattle production and more recently as a destination for people seeking outdoor recreation. The nominated wetland area contains extensive aboriginal archaeological sites and a number of important European historical sites. The area also contains the largest mainland oil and gas production field in Australia.

20. Land tenure/ownership:
(a) the site: approximately half of the area is held as Crown Land-Pastoral Lease and the rest as Crown Land - National Park Reserve.

(b) the surroundings/catchment: Crown Land - Pastoral Lease.

21. Current land use:
The area is used primarily for cattle grazing and for oil and gas production. The area is becoming increasingly important for recreation and tourism as access roads are upgraded.

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:
(a) the site: There is a growing concern on the effects associated with impacts of rabbit grazing. The area contains extremely high numbers of this pest and known impacts include: loss of vegetation, lack of plant recruitment and increased soil erosion. Because of the remoteness and large areas involved, the development of biological controls will be required.

(b) surroundings/catchment: none known at present.

23. Conservation measures taken:
A significant portion of the declared wetlands, including the Coongie Lake system has been reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. A draft plan of management has been prepared and the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service is developing a monitoring program for the area.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:
Most of the area held as Crown Land - Pastoral Lease is under review for inclusion into the National Park Reserve system. In addition, a program has been initiated to map and establish long-term monitoring sites throughout the wetland.

25. Current scientific research and facilities:
The South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has an ongoing program to provide for inventory, assessment and monitoring of the area including detailed mapping of the wetland habitats.

26. Current conservation education:
Both pre-visit and on-site information and education material is available through the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Information includes: access routes and guides and descriptions of the habitats and wildlife. A visitor centre is scheduled to be placed at Innamincka.

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27. Current recreation and tourism:
It is estimated that up to 30,000 visitors use the area annually on a seasonal basis; most recreational use centres along the river frontage adjacent to the township of Innamincka and to a lessor extent, the Coongie Lakes.

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28. Jurisdiction:
Government of South Australia

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29. Management authority:
South Australia National Parks and Wildlife Service
GPO Box 1782
Adelaide South Australia 5001

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30. Bibliographical references:
National Parks and Wildlife Service (1988). Innamincka Draft Plan of Management. SA Dept. Environment and Planning, Adelaide.

Reid, J and J Gillen (1988). The Coongie Lakes Study. SA Department of Environment and Planning, Adelaide.

Mollemans, F. H., J. R. W. Reid, M. B. Thompson, L. Alexander and L. Pedler (1984). Biological Survey of the Cooper Creek Environmental Association. North-Eastern South Australia. SA Department of Environment and Planning, Adelaide.
